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(May 14) -- Even as [proposals pour in](#) for cleaning up the [Gulf of Mexico oil spill](#), one veteran of a massive (and secret) crude spill in the Persian Gulf says he has a tried-and-true solution.

Now if only the people who could make it happen would return his calls.

"No one's listening," says Nick Pozzi, who was an engineer with Saudi Aramco in the Middle East when he says an accident there in 1993 generated a spill far larger than anything the United States has ever seen.



Eric Gay, AP

A shrimp boat collects oil with booms in the waters of Chandeleur Sound, La., on May 5. An engineer who witnessed a crude spill in the Persian Gulf in 1993 says BP should use a fleet of empty supertankers to suck crude off the water's surface.

According to Pozzi, that mishap, kept under wraps for close to two decades and first reported by [Esquire](#), dumped nearly 800 million gallons of oil into the Persian Gulf, which would make it more than 70 times the size of the [Exxon Valdez](#) spill.

But remarkably, by employing a fleet of empty supertankers to suck crude off the water's surface, Pozzi's team was not only able to clean up the spill, but also salvage 85 percent of the oil, he says.

"We took [the oil] out of the water so it would save the environment off the Arabian Gulf, and then we put it into tanks until we could figure out how to clean it," he told AOL News.

While BP, the oil giant at the center of the recent accident, works to stanch the leak from the sunken [Deepwater Horizon](#) rig, Pozzi insists the company should be following his lead.

AOL News could not independently verify Pozzi's account, but one former Aramco employee did acknowledge that there was a large spill in the region in the early '90s, and that Aramco had used tankers to clean up earlier oil slicks.

Pozzi, now retired, spent 17 years of his career in Saudi Arabia, part of it as a manager in Aramco's technical support and maintenance division.

Shortly after the April 22 sinking of the Deepwater Horizon, he and a friend, Houston attorney Jon King (with whom Pozzi recently launched a business called Wow Environmental Solutions), traveled to Houma, La., headquarters for BP's response center, to offer up the lessons he'd learned working in the Persian Gulf.

Ever since, he says, the pair's been stonewalled.

When he called the manager at BP in charge of the cleanup effort, Pozzi says he was told "don't bother me."

"He said, 'Follow procedures,' " Pozzi recalls. "He said, 'I'm taking names and I'm going to sue you.' "

Next, Pozzi and King phoned the president of BP and left a message with his secretary. An hour later, though, they received a call from "from a young lady in BP headquarters" who asked how she might assist them. They told her about their plan -- but have received no further contact.

Then, early this week, the duo say they spoke with Capt. Ed Stanton, the Coast Guard commander overseeing a length of the affected coastline. Stanton asked for a written proposal. That's the last Pozzi and King heard from him.

"It sounds so simple that they turn around and say, 'That was years ago. We've got modern technology now,' " Pozzi says. "But their modern technology isn't working too well."

Last week BP lowered a concrete-and-steel containment dome into the gulf in a highly chronicled effort to cap the underwater leak, only to have to quickly abort that effort.

Meantime, Saudia Arabia is sitting on the world's largest fleet of supertankers. Pozzi suggests that the U.S. government tell the Saudis: " 'Hey, we helped you out, can you help us out? Lend us some supertankers.' For a little payback for helping them out during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait."

Moreover, he says, "there are many, many, many other countries that have oil tankers" that, for a price, could be deployed off Louisiana.

Stephen Reilly, CEO of Slickbar, a leading oil spill equipment and vessels manufacturer, says that while he's unfamiliar with supertankers being used in this way, Pozzi's proposal could well work.

"Any containment area or barge or tanker can be used for reception, and they certainly have the pumping system on board," Reilly says. "So in terms of using assets like that to pump stuff into tanks, by all means."

Pozzi speculates that the reluctance on the part of those he's contacted comes down to one word: cash. When oil tankers are taken out of service for a special project like this, they stop earning money for their owners.

BP, Pozzi says, should "step up to the plate" and offer to pay anyone willing to lend a tanker whatever they would lose in profits by dispatching one of their ships to the gulf region.

BP on Thursday said the cost of battling the spill has reached nearly [\\$450 million](#).

Calls to BP and Stanton were not immediately returned. The BP press line voice mail message asks anyone offering "technical solutions" to dial another number to "most efficiently" address the suggestion.

During his years with Aramco, Pozzi says, he took a number of approaches to cleaning oil spills, from dumping flour into the sea and hauling out the resultant tar gobs to dropping hay into the slicks and burning it.

The 1993 Persian Gulf spill, Pozzi says, began when Aramco was loading a tanker and "the umbilical cord got away." Oil started spewing from the pumps. Panicked, a line of tankers waiting to be filled began hightailing away from the flammable spray. Massive ships maneuvered in tight quarters. It was chaos.

Because of a confidentiality agreement with Aramco, Pozzi won't describe exactly what happened next, except to say that "there were [then] other mishaps causing other oil to spill."

"The order of magnitude rose exponentially due to the panic level," he says.

The tankers worked for the next six months skimming oil off the water's surface and pumping it into tanks for cleaning. Cleanup efforts went on for several years after that. Still, that such an enormous slick could be successfully cleaned ought to point the way this time around, Pozzi says.

"My guys have worked on a lot of oil spills, and back in the late '80s and early '90s we figured out the best way to clean up oil through lessons learned," he says. "This is what we think they need to do. We know it works."

Or, as King puts it: "We just want them to get off their ass and use multiple solutions to clean this crap."

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